

Exhibit 14

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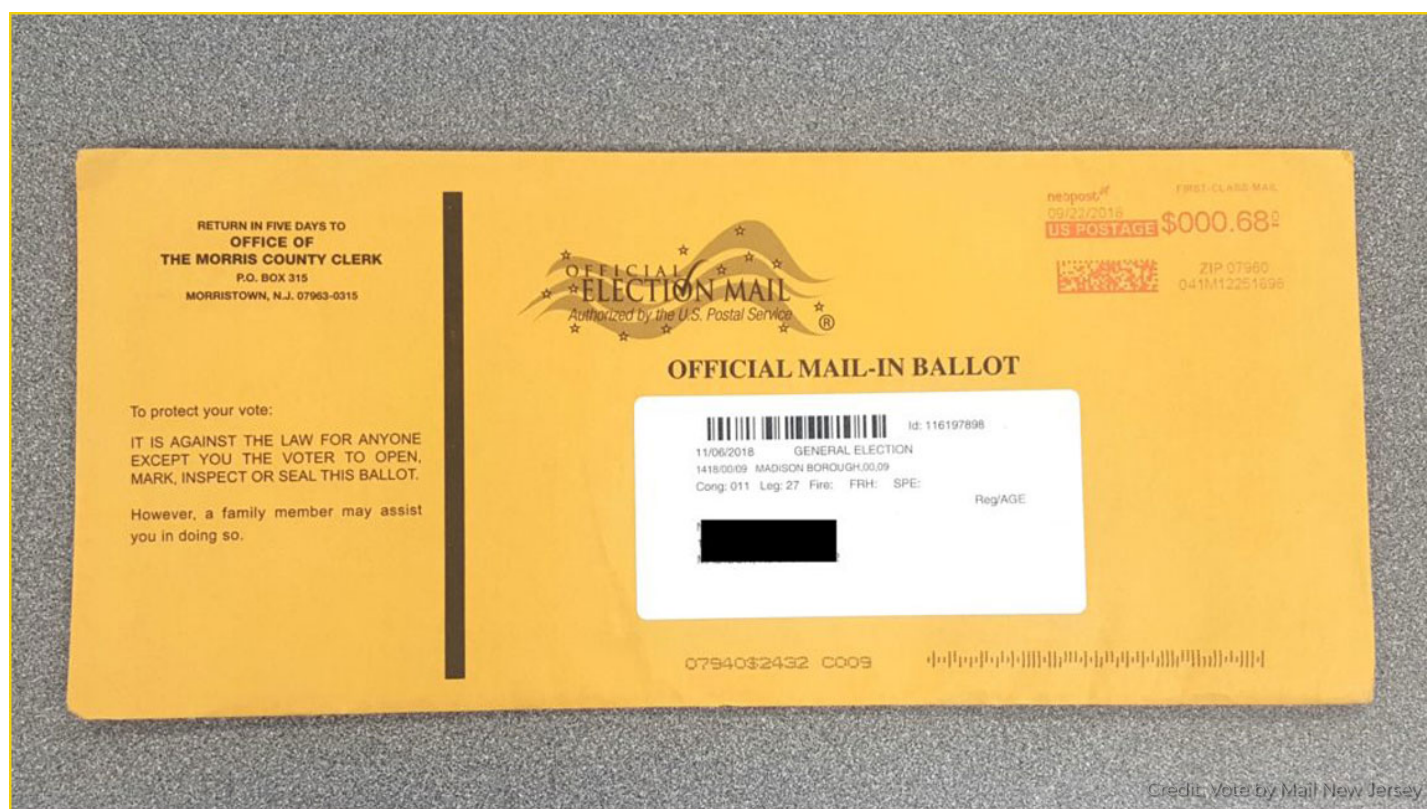
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One in 10 Ballots Rejected in Last Month's Vote-by-Mail Elections

COLLEEN O'DEA, DATA REPORTER | JUNE 10, 2020 | [POLITICS, NJ DECIDES 2020](#)

NJ Spotlight analysis finds that New Jersey election officials did not count ballots for several reasons, often because of issues with signatures



One in 10 mail-in ballots were not counted in May 12 elections.

About one in every 10 people who mailed in ballots in last month's special elections had their votes rejected, which could forebode the potential disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of New Jerseyans in next month's primaries.

An NJ Spotlight analysis of the vote-by-mail ballots cast in 31 municipalities that held nonpartisan municipal, school board or special elections on May 12 — an entirely mail-in election — found that election officials did not count 9.6% of ballots sent in. A database provided by the state Division of Elections shows more than a dozen reasons for rejecting ballots. Most commonly, officials did not count ballots because the signature on the ballot did not match the one on file, the ballot arrived too late or the required certificate was not enclosed.

do that. People will, with every good intention, try to do this right ... but to maybe not even find out that their ballot was rejected, they've just assumed it has been accepted. A simply way for a voter to verify that their ballot has been included is imperative.”

The May 12 rejection rate is significantly higher than the 3% rejection rate in the 2018 general election, according to NJ Spotlight’s analysis of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission’s [survey](#) results.

“The high number of rejected ballots in the May municipal elections because of signature issues underscores how vital it is that we provide an opportunity for voters to cure their ballots in time for the primary election,” said Jesse Burns, executive director of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and one of the plaintiffs in that case.

Asked whether the governor is concerned about the potential disenfranchisement of voters next month, Christine Lee, a spokeswoman for Gov. Phil Murphy, said, “The governor has sought to expand access to voting and ensure that all voters are counted. The Department of State and the Division of Elections are actively pursuing policies and procedures for the July 7th Primary Election to ensure fairness and transparency of the voting process.”

Changes for July 7 primary

In early April, Murphy [postponed the primary](#) that would have been held last Tuesday until July 7 because of concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic; then, he decided in mid-May to conduct the election primarily by mail. Close to 6.2 million registered New Jerseyans are to receive either a ballot — if they are regular Democratic or Republican voters — or an application for a mail-in ballot for all others registered voters, although there will also be at least one polling place open in every municipality for those who prefer to vote in person.

“Ten percent rejected is definitely higher than in the past, significantly higher, but it’s unsurprising,” said Henal Patel, an attorney with the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice, which is asking a U.S. District Court judge to order the state to revise current [signature verification procedures](#) to allow voters to fix any problem with a mail-in ballot so that it can be counted.

The stakes are high: While the presidential primaries are essentially decided, there are [contested primaries](#) in one or both parties for U.S. Sen. Cory Booker’s seat and in 10 of the state’s dozen congressional districts. Two years ago, 700,000 people voted in the 2018 primary election. If that many people choose to vote this year, and half vote by mail, a 10% rejection rate would mean 35,000 individual votes would go uncounted.

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey and NAACP New Jersey State Conference, plaintiffs in the suit, [amended their action last week](#) to include as a plaintiff Shamisa Zvoma, a Montclair woman who court papers say is “outraged and disheartened” after learning her ballot in last month’s tight municipal race was rejected because of an alleged signature mismatch.

Legislation to fix some of the problems?

Patel said mistakes in the May 12 elections were inevitable, given everyone was forced to vote by mail, whether they wanted to or not, and the majority of the public have not previously used a mail-in ballot and were unfamiliar with all the parts of it that need to be properly filled out, signed and returned.





Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker (D-Middlesex) said he has heard from people who have had their votes invalidated and is sponsoring legislation ([A-3591](#)) designed to address some issues related to mail-in ballots. The bill would require the state to provide greater education to voters and seeks to correct at least some issues with ballot rejections by having the Secretary of State give county election officials standards to use in determining whether to accept or reject ballots as well as prohibit the rejection of ballots that were insufficiently sealed due to an envelope’s glue.

“Voting should be straightforward, transparent and verifiable,” said Zwicker, who chairs the Assembly Science, Innovation and Technology Committee. “Our system struggles to

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<p>AUTOMATIC VOTE-BY-MAIL</p> <p>All active registered Republican and Democratic voters will automatically receive a vote-by-mail ballot. A pre-paid postage return envelope will be included. All unaffiliated voters and inactive Republican and Democratic voters will receive a postage-paid vote-by-mail application.</p>	<p>DEADLINES</p> <p></p> <p>Vote-by-mail ballots must be postmarked on or before July 7 (Election Day) and must be received by the County Board of Elections by July 14.</p>	<p>DROP BOX LOCATIONS</p> <p></p> <p>To the extent possible, there will be at least 5 readily accessible secure ballot drop box locations per county.</p>
<p>NO SAMPLE BALLOTS</p> <p></p> <p>Voters will not receive sample ballots, but will receive notification of their polling locations.</p>	<p>POLLING PLACES</p> <p>A minimum of 1 polling location per municipality will be available and each county will open a minimum of 50% of its polling places (provided that sufficient poll workers are available). CDC guidelines for polling place safety and sanitation will be followed. Voters cannot return voted vote-by-mail ballots to polling places.</p>	<p>PROVISIONAL BALLOTS</p> <p></p> <p>Voters who vote at polling places will vote using a provisional ballot. Voters with disabilities may vote on ADA-accessible voting machines.</p>

League of Women Voters' advisory on July 7 election procedures

Many saw the May 12 elections as something of a test for how well an election conducted fully with voting by mail would work. The number of issues that arose likely played a role in Murphy's decision to allow for at least some in-person voting.

In all, at least 11,453 ballots for the May 12 elections were rejected, out of some 119,000 that voters returned. There were particular problems in two municipalities.

A substantial portion of the rejected ballots were in Paterson, related to [allegations of attempted voter fraud](#). The Passaic County Board of Elections decided not to count some 800 ballots for city council races after hundreds of ballots were found in bundles in mailboxes in Haledon and South Paterson. In total, more than 3,200 ballots cast in Paterson, or 19% of the total, were rejected.

Notable issues in Paterson, Montclair

Removing Paterson from the counts reduces the rejection rate to 8.1%, which is still significantly higher than the rate in 2018.

[Montclair also had many ballots go uncounted](#) — 1,100. Postal delays played at least some role, according to Renee Baskerville, who lost the mayoral contest by fewer than 200 votes and has filed a lawsuit in Superior Court seeking to have counted all votes that were properly cast. The May 12 elections were conducted under typical vote-by-mail rules, which require a ballot to have been postmarked by Election Day and received no more

than 48 hours later to be counted. Due to mail delivery delays related to the coronavirus pandemic, Murphy has changed that for the primary and is allowing ballots to be counted up to a week after the election as long as they are postmarked by Election Day.

Micah Rasmussen, director of the Rebovich Institute for New Jersey Politics at Rider University, said that while rejections are problematic, they also prove that voting by mail does not permit widespread fraud.

“The disqualification of VBM ballots in past elections is definitely a growing pain, and we’ve got to get better at it,” he said. “But I also point to it as an indication of the strong security measures that are in place to ensure fair and accurate elections. As you know, there’s been a recent trend of partisan criticism of VBMs, and what it fails to account for is that there are many steps in the long food chain of a stray VBM application or even a ballot, but there’s only one way for a VBM to be counted, and that’s for every step to be followed correctly. There’s absolutely a risk of not counting votes that don’t check the entire sequence of steps and security measures, but there’s really no other way to safeguard the vote. That’s why voter can have confidence in it.”

Signature verification, a sticking point

Still, the League of Women Voters and NAACP say the state’s signature-verification requirement is unconstitutional because it disenfranchises so many. Election officials are not trained in handwriting analysis to be able to properly determine whether the signature on a ballot matches the one on a voter’s registration, not to mention that a person’s signature can change over time and with age.

The groups note that New Jersey voters are not informed when a ballot is going to be rejected, nor are they given the opportunity to fix issues that led to a rejection. Sixteen states give voters a chance to prove they had completed and submitted a ballot, in some cases for up to a week after Election Day.

“One thing some all-VBM states have — and I’d like to see us adopt — is an app that lets voters track their ballots once they put them into the mail,” Rasmussen said. “They can follow them through every step until they receive confirmation that they’ve been received and counted.”

Mary Corrigan, a member of the Mercer County Board of Elections, said anyone concerned that their signature has changed can complete and sign a [new voter registration form, available online](#) and check the “Signature Update” box. The voter registration deadline for this year’s primaries is June 16.

Patel said the lawsuit was updated to cover provisional ballots, as well, because anyone who goes to vote in person will have to use a paper ballot and these will also be subject to signature verification.

Murphy's executive order requiring clerks to send ballots to all active Democratic and Republican voters and a ballot application to all others registered also provides for some in-person voting to be available in recognition, the governor said at the time, that not everyone wants to send in a ballot. But — due to the large numbers of mail-in ballots being sent — there will not be voting machines for use by the public. People will have to cast a provisional ballot that election officials will count after processing all of the mailed-in ballots so they can make sure individuals are not voting twice: once by mail and once in person.

Patel said she is hoping for a federal ruling on the preliminary injunction soon because the primary elections are now less than four weeks away.

As Burns noted, "The timeline is short."

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